

# The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 19 – November 22 2019

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

**Fire a setback for  
Kennedy Park stairs... p3**

**Super City protestor  
heartened... p5**

**Catching up with  
Tabitha Becroft... p21**

## Open democracy takes hit at first local-board meeting

A motion to ban the media and residents from Devonport-Takapuna Local Board workshops was on the agenda for the new board's first meeting, held as the Rangitoto Observer went to press.

Board chair Aidan Bennett was to put the motion, seconded by George Wood, a former

board chair who has always been uncomfortable with holding open workshops.

On the surface, it appeared Bennett and Wood had the numbers. Another member, Toni van Tonder, from Bennett's Fresh Approach ticket, has said she will vote for closed workshops. On the six-member board, Bennett

could use his casting vote to get the motion through.

In February 2017, the Devonport-Takapuna board broke fresh democratic ground, with support from our sister publication, the Devonport Flagstaff, to hold open workshops.

**To page 2**

## Porthole peeker joins pirate party



**Ahoy... Emma Meikle (2) enjoys Milford shopping centre's Pirate Day, celebrating the area's history, on 9 November. Photo: Keeley Watson. More on pages 16 and 17**



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## From page 1

## Secret sessions on the agenda

Devonport-Takapuna and Kaipatiki were the only two of the city's 21 local boards to insist on keeping the sessions open.

No decisions are made at the workshops, so by law they don't have to be public.

Bennett says officers, board members and staff have become "uncomfortable" with the public and media attending the workshops. Better governance can result from a more open exchange behind closed doors, he says.

Heart of the Shore ticket members on the board – Trish Deans, Jan O'Connor, and Ruth Jackson – were adamant in the election campaign that the open workshops were vital to the democratic process.

If the open workshops are dropped as expected, that decision could potentially be reversed in the second half of the board term, when Jackson becomes chair.

When asked for an opinion on whether the public workshops should remain as an access point for grassroots scrutiny of council, North Shore ward councillor Chris Darby said the decision was not within his jurisdiction. Councillor Richard Hills and Mayor Phil Goff did not reply.

## 2 The Strand: empty for 619 days

The former Takapuna Library building at 2 The Strand has been vacant since an earthquake notice was issued in March 2018. The 1956 heritage-listed public building has now been unoccupied for 619 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.

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Observer

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## Van Tonder backs closed workshops

Last week the Observer asked new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Toni van Tonder whether she would be supporting Aidan Bennett's motion and for her reasons. Below is her response.

"I do intend to support Aidan's notice of motion. This is because I've been elected by the public to do a job and it's my intention to do that job to the best of my ability.

"To do it well, my feeling is that we need to provide the right environment for council officers and staff to feel safe to share information with the elected members without interruption or misinterpretation by the public. I could see from having previously attended workshops that there was a lack of control in those meetings as there are no standing orders. This allowed members of the community to interrupt, distract or start sharing information with the wider public in a way that was inaccurate or misleading. This is damaging to all of us, it's not fair to the community we represent, and it makes it stressful for council staff to work alongside our local board.

"What then happens is that key information can be withheld. We can't be expected to make good decisions as a local board when we're not provided all the information required to do so.

"There are other opportunities for the public to participate and present to the DTLB and I am comfortable with that.

"With Aidan's NoM, consideration has been given and solutions have been provided

to allow for access of information to the public on the topics being discussed. There are 21 local Boards in Auckland, 19 of which close their workshops. What Aidan is proposing, is, in my view, best practice.

"As the owner of a local paper, I am more than happy for you to regularly organise a sit-down with Aidan, myself or the support staff to discuss any items of interest.

"I'm keen to work alongside you in a productive manner."

## Backward step, says Gillon

Moves to have board workshops secret are a backward step, says former board member Grant Gillon, who was instrumental in getting them made public in 2017.

His approach, Gillon says, was always about what was better for the public and democracy, not what was "comfortable" for the board and council staff.

The workshops offered the public the chance to see issues debated and board members' opinions detailed, rather than just decisions made at full board meetings.

Claims that officers held back information in the open meetings were unfounded, Gillon said.

Bennett's 'Fresh Approach' was "anti-public, anti-democracy and anti-transparency," Gillon said.

Additionally, no legal reason existed for closing the workshops, Gillon said.

## Editorial

## Trust-us secrecy no recipe for unity

Aidan Bennett and Toni van Tonder promised a 'Fresh Approach' from their ticket seeking election to the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board.

However, Bennett's first official move as chair is to take the board back to 'the dark side' of secret meetings, where board members and council officers can have cosy behind-closed-doors chats, away from the scrutiny of the media and the public.

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board has had open workshops since February 2017.

Bennett, in his motion to the board, points out no decisions are made at the workshops, so there is no legal requirement to make them public.

However, his real reason is instructive:

"This has led to these workshops becoming uncomfortable environments for local board members, local board staff and other related invitees, which has resulted in a deterioration in overall relationships between the local board and various parties. We are therefore seeking to restore confidence in the local board process of governance and informed decision-making by making these Devonport-Takapuna Local Board workshops only for local board members and staff, and any other invited guests who can contribute information and advice."

Bennett is also publisher of monthly good news magazine Channel. Does a conflict of

interest also exist, where a publisher can influence what access the public and media have to council affairs?

Open workshops can be an important part of the democratic process. They are the first port of call, where bad, inappropriate or sometimes just plain silly ideas from council officers can first raise their heads.

Council and Auckland Transport staff are not always comfortable with being exposed to scrutiny, but they are paid through rates and should be accountable to the electorate.

Bennett's motion is 'Trump Lite'. Trust me, we know what we are doing, and we will spin it directly to you on social media when we feel like it – omitting anything controversial or potentially negative, of course. Anything else is fake news. Decisions nipped out in workshops will be rubber-stamped at board meetings with little debate.

Is this really a 'Fresh Approach' that is good for our community?

A massive fight over the issue was expected at the first meeting of the board as the Observer went to press.

The issue is sure to tarnish the board members' relationships with each other from the start.

So much for a united way ahead.

**Rob Drent**  
Managing Editor

# Guy Fawkes fire damage hampers stairs renewal

A Guy Fawkes night fire is an “incredibly disappointing” setback to the reinstatement of the popular coastal stairs at Castor Bay’s Kennedy Park, which were closed by cyclone damage almost two years ago.

The 4 November scrub fire on the cliff-face damaged supports of the wooden walkway leading to the stairs and piles under the top flight. The more than 120-step stairs were destroyed by a slip in Cyclone Debbie in April 2017.

“The trust is incredibly disappointed this has happened on top of the natural disaster,” Kennedy Park World War II Trust chair Chris Owen says.

“It’s just another set-back to getting the walkway and stairs functioning again.”

There have been fires on previous Guy Fawkes, but further from the stairs.

The stairs were originally due to reopen in late 2018, Owen says. Then, earlier this year, the due date became October, then before Christmas, but now it could be later still.

Scores of people previously used the stairs daily, Owen says, including walkers, runners, swimmers and people exercising their dogs.

Three fire appliances attended the fire about 11pm on 5 November, says Takapuna senior station officer Mark Neville.

Fireworks are the likely cause, although the fire fighters didn’t see any activity when they attended.

“Scrub and grass fires are not uncommon on cliff edges on the North Shore,” Neville says.

David Green, president of Castor Bay Ratepayers and Residents Association, was at home when he smelt smoke and heard the police helicopter.

Green joined others running up to the park



**‘Incredibly disappointing’... A fire that damaged Kennedy Park stairs is yet another delay for WWII trust chair Chris Owen**

to help. He spoke to neighbours who were first on the scene and threw buckets of water on the fire.

“It is disappointing given the stairs were due to reopen before Christmas,” Green says.

Auckland Council says the delay may not be as bad as it could have been.

Head of operational maintenance Agnes McCormack says it is fortunate the stairs

were being built offsite, with the intention of lowering them onto piles, so were not affected by the fire.

“While the existing structure did sustain damage that will need repairs, we were incredibly lucky the rebuild works and installation hadn’t started,” she says.

“We estimate the project will be delayed by at least a few weeks due to fire damage and repairs.

“Revised timings for the project will be confirmed once we receive the official damage report from engineers currently assessing the site.”

A consent for the project was granted in July, before geotechnical work to stabilise the bank began.

A report to the local board last year estimated the cost of the project at \$470,000.



**Well alright... Flames licking up the cliff at Castor Bay**



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# Super City critic heartened at progress

A Milford woman is hailing progress in her fight against the Auckland Super City, with a committee's report on her petition being referred to Parliament.

Susan Wann addressed the Governance and Administration Committee on her petition, calling for an inquiry into Auckland Council, in May.

Wann spoke about her petition – signed by nearly 800 people in August 2018 – and supporting evidence of widespread frustration that Auckland Council appears to be ignoring the views of local communities and shutting residents and local boards out of decisions that affect them.

Now the committee has heard a response from deputy mayor Bill Cashmore who said an independent review in 2016 led to recommendations for council processes, including improving the relationship with local boards.

The committee has now produced a report to the House of Representatives, in which it recommends the council devolve more budget and authority to local boards.

Wann is heartened the committee in its report considered not only her petition but a more recent council survey, run by Colmar Brunton, finding public satisfaction with Auckland Council is around 20 per cent and trust in council decision-making is also 20 per cent.

"It's a small thing, but I think there has been a lot of small things. I hope it's a cog in the wheel that brings a focus to bear on a need for more democracy in local government," Wann says.



**Taking it to the top... Milford's Susan Wann is happy her protest against the Super city is being reported to Parliament**

## Wet wipes and fat cause Milford sewage spill

Sewage overflowed onto a Milford footpath after a drain was blocked by wet wipes and fat.

Watercare had to call in a special vacuum truck to suck up the mass of wipes and fat in Seaview Rd on the morning of 14 November, after its usual equipment failed.

Testing has shown that minor amounts of wastewater flowed into the Wairau Creek but nothing reached the beach, a spokesperson says.

Watercare believes several properties contributed to the incident and reminds residents that only the "three Ps" (poo, pee and paper) should go down the toilet.

## Car park stoush

The Takapuna Residents Association case against Auckland Council with respect to its decisions over the proposed town square will be heard in the High Court on 10 March at 10am.

## Council delays costly for Forrest Hill United

Delays to council work on Forrest Hill United's home fields are proving costly for the football club, which has shelled out \$100,000 to use nearby school fields.

Two fields at Becroft Park are often flooded through the season and, with council work dragging on longer than expected at nearby Sunnynook Park, the club has been forced to pay for use of fields at Westlake Girls High School over the past four years, says club commercial manager Andrew Diver.

"We have spent \$100,000 buying turf space, and that's not really sustainable for a community club, nor do we think we should have to pay," Diver says.

Adding to pressure on local fields, particularly Greville Park, is the fact Sunnynook-based rugby league club the Glenfield Rovers has been displaced by playing-field work.

The Auckland Council project to dig up Becroft Park's fields two and three, replace the drainage and restore sand and grass was going to start this summer, but, as the work at Sunnynook hasn't been completed, the start date is now the summer of 2020, Diver says.

Diver says similar delays at Becroft Park

would be a major disaster, but, as long as the summer of 2020 is not rainy, he is optimistic the project will go well and be completed in time for the winter season. It is a less complex task than the major flood-control project at Sunnynook.

The Sunnynook Park fields are due to all reopen in time for the next winter season.

Auckland Council said the renewal work at Becroft has been delayed because of the impact it was going to have on cricket this season.

"There would not have been enough grounds available over summer with sportsfields renewals also happening at Freyberg Park and Onepoto Domain and Sunnynook Park not being finished yet," head of project delivery John Schermbrucker says.

The proposed renewal works consist of renewing the number 2 and 3 sand-carpet fields, including new primary and secondary drainage, replacing irrigation heads and controller, new slit drains, new sand carpet, grow-in of new couch turf, and replacement of the existing cricket wicket astroturf cover.

The project budget is \$735,000.

Work is planned to start in October 2020 and be completed by April 2021.



# PROPERTY UPDATE - OCTOBER 2019

Alistairhelm.co.nz

Written and produced by Alistair Helm, Licensed real estate salesperson



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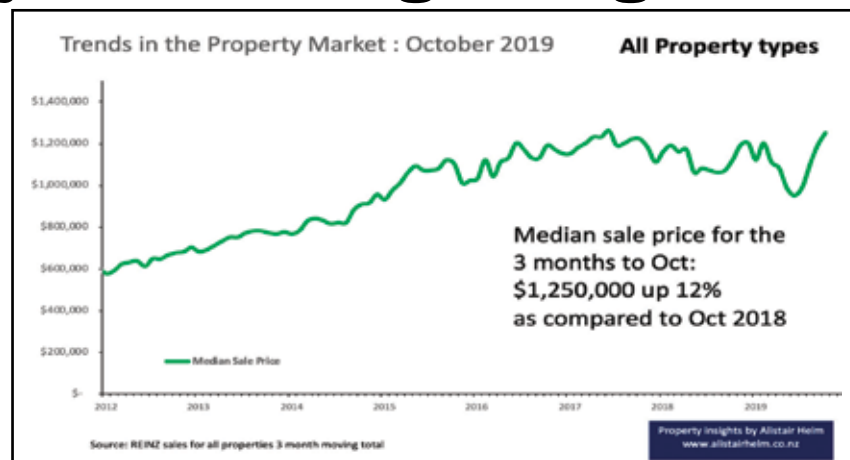
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## Property Prices Strengthening

Recent media articles seem to consistently be pointing to a rising sentiment in the Auckland property market, after what has been a very quiet three years, in which prices have been flat or easing slightly. As for the local market of the Rangitoto Observer coverage, this same sentiment is showing itself more strongly in a significant rebounding of median sales price. The latest 3 months to October shows a median sale price of \$1,250,000 which is just below the peak of the market last seen in June 2017.

The chart certainly shows quite a strong rebounding of prices from the low point in June of this year at \$950,000 to the current level of \$1.25m.

Property cycles typically see sales volumes rise and fall, ahead of price movement; and so it is in this case. Way back in November 2015 sales volumes started to show year-on-year falls. For the next three and a half years, with but a few exceptions sales volumes have been weakening. Falling from a 3-month total of over 200 to the current level of 150. In that time median sales price hovered around \$1.1m. However, heading into winter this year, we saw sales levels



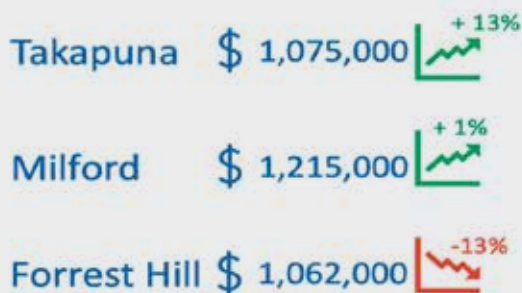
begin to recover as buyer activity picked up. Now as we head into summer we're seeing sales volumes year-on-year up 20%. With that rising level of sales the median sales price has recovered strongly.

A key factor in the current market is the slow level of new listings coming onto the market, and the resultant thin selection of properties for buyers to choose from. Typically, the run up to Christmas is a

very active time of year, however this year strong buyer demand is soaking up the new listings resulting in this low inventory.

Across the area there is no doubt that results by suburb are a bit of a mixed bag. Milford remains the strongest market with strong rises in sales and prices, followed by Takapuna. Forrest Hill and Sunnynook are the weakest, although the latter is seeing recent sales volume growth starting.

### Property Report – October 2019



Source: Real Estate Institute of NZ

## New charity will provide extra activities for disabled people



**Right royal moment... Diane James with a photo of her son Daniel, then aged five, and husband Steve with Diana, Princess of Wales. Daniel, who has cerebral palsy, is now 34.**

**A new North Shore charitable trust has been set up to offer opportunities for adults living with complex disabilities. Rob Drent talks to Diane James.**

A touching picture of Diana, Princess of Wales, with Daniel James and his father Steve, is framed on the wall of the James family's Cheltenham home.

Daniel, who has cerebral palsy, was aged five at the time, and at the Peto Institute in Hungary for a conductive education course when the princess popped in for a visit.

This year, Daniel, now aged 34, went on a Pacific Island cruise with his flatmate and two carers for a week. It cost around \$8500 for a \$1500 cruise. "It was an amazing experience for him – he enjoyed it so much," says his mother Diane James.

Daniel is lucky to be offered such opportunities, and Diane knows full well others aren't so fortunate.

This year, she became a trustee of the Liz Soper Foundation of Care, an organisation that provides grants for extra activities for adults with complex disabilities.

The trust launched mid-year and is actively seeking donations, with a major fundraiser planned this week.

Diane became involved through her links to Liz Soper, a long-time champion of choice and better standards for adults living with complex disabilities, and her Creative Abilities programmes. Creative Abilities runs 16 houses across the North Shore where people with severe disabilities can live in the community, but under expert care at the same time.

Daniel James was born 12 weeks premature

and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at seven months.

He went to the Wilson Home School and lived at home until he was 21, when Diane and Steve decided he should move to a Creative Abilities house.

He had already been staying with Creative Abilities once a week for respite care.

"We thought about it for six months – it was a big decision. No one is going to take better care of a child than its parents, are they? But we put our faith in Liz."

It was well placed, says Diane, with Daniel flourishing under the care provided and enjoying the range of activities and programmes on offer.

The move has been uplifting for the other children as well. Spontaneous trips and holidays became possible.

"With Daniel, there is always a lot of pre-planning needed."

A trip to the movies, for example, requires a caregiver and a mobility taxi. A simple \$16 movie can cost \$160.

Daniel comes back to the family home for three days at Christmas, and Diane and Steve generally take him out on Sunday afternoons.

Creative Abilities is celebrating 25 years this year, and Diane says The Liz Soper Foundation of Care seemed a natural next step.

The foundation has \$10,000 in its account. Diane and the other four trustees are now applying to other foundations for money and working on protocols on how it will be managed and distributed.

Email [ashley@creativeabilities.co.nz](mailto:ashley@creativeabilities.co.nz) for more information. All proceeds go to the Liz Soper Foundation.



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## Summer vibe at Hauraki School's Twilight Fair



Picnicking with teddy bears and other friends: Saoirse McLeod (5), Taylor Metcalf (5) and Elodie McLeod (3) enjoy the Hauraki School Twilight Fair. Photos: Keeley Watson

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**Balmy evening...**  
The sun came out for the Hauraki School Twilight Fair on 9 November, creating a positive summer vibe. Families gathered on the grass with picnic blankets and around 3000 people enjoyed the food trucks, mobile farm and second-hand stalls. It raised \$55,000 towards a replacement school swimming pool. (Clockwise from top left): Jahanara Khan (6) enjoys a waffle; Isla Lambourne (4) pets a rabbit; and Tove Tui Markovic (2) feeds peanuts to a nosy alpaca.

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## Court of Appeal wanted every submission answered

I would like to respond to the comment made in the last issue of the Rangitoto Observer (8 November) by Auckland Council's team leader of plans and places Mr Dave Sanders about the judgement of the Court of Appeal on the zoning decisions for the two blocks in Takapuna, the Promenade Block and Lake Road.

Mr Sanders is not correct in referring to the decision of the court as "not saying every submission matter should be addressed in total". The court on the contrary said that the Independent Hearings Panel and council had to provide reasons for accepting and rejecting every submission. The law allowed for submissions referring to the same matter to be grouped together, but every submission had to be answered.

And about the "millions" of [further] submission points that had to be addressed, the council has not yet explained how 3800

further submissions added 1,400,000 submission points to the Unitary Plan process, when it was made clear as a rule that further submissions couldn't add any further points to the primary submissions. If anything, the further submissions would have made the task of the panel much easier, helping the commissioners to understand better the various specific issues.

While my case was limited to the Promenade Block and Lake Road sites, it is crystal clear to anyone familiar with the decision-making on the Unitary Plan that there were no adequate reasons in relation to all other submissions seeking site-specific relief.

The consequence of all this is that submitters to the Unitary Plan process throughout Auckland were left to guess or infer reasons, and disempowered from being able to consider proper appeal rights – not only in my

case, but in all other submissions seeking rezoning and height changes. This is the 'elephant in the room' that the council is well aware of.

In his 2016 statement of evidence on zoning to the Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel, Mr Sanders indicated that for "the coastal edge as a major recreational asset it is considered that a conservative zoning is still appropriate in these areas".

I certainly agree with that policy and I submitted that greater opportunities for intensification should have been recognised in areas further inland instead of the waterfront, in locations where construction and land costs would be lower, promoting more affordable housing, and that the best and more immediate intensification could be achieved in such areas closer to the Akoranga Bus Station.

**Franco Belgiorio-Nettis**

### At long last

Whoopie! Finally, Takapuna has its own supermarket! New World has just opened a "Metro" store in Shore City and it has delighted the locals. I'm one of them! For so many years we have had to drive and shop at the larger supermarkets.

Every now and then, we would hear rumours that one was on the way, only to be disappointed when nothing eventuated. Well, now it's a fact and it's proving to be very popular with the locals. Delicatessen, butcher, bakery and usual grocery items all in the centre of our town.... It's a fun place to shop. Thank goodness for New World.

**Mandy Dempsey**



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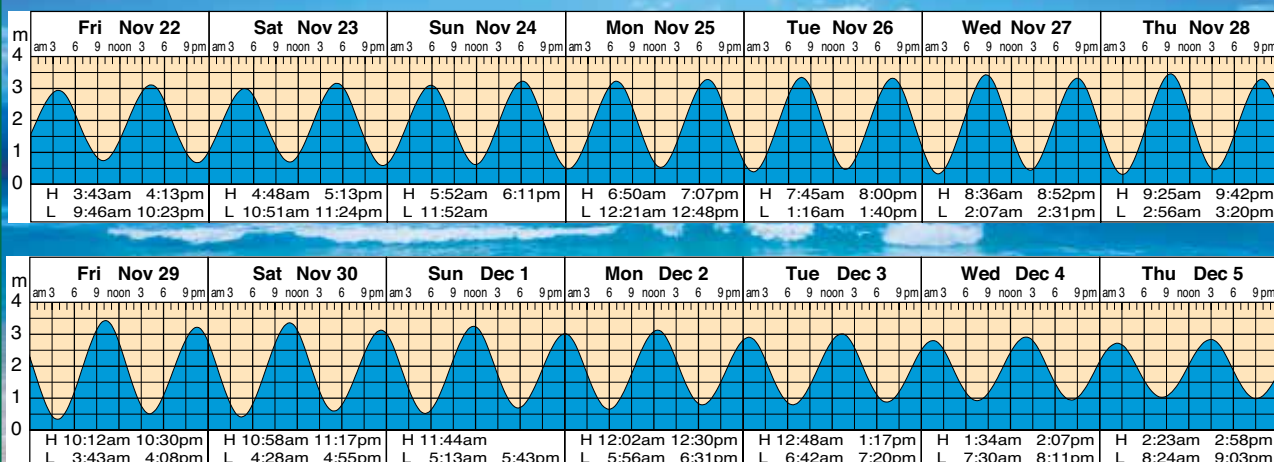
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## Milford / Takapuna Tides





# Bodyline with Guy Body

RIGHT, MR BENNETT, SO WHERE DID YOU SEE THIS MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC?



## Police chopper called to capsize

The police helicopter was called when a man and his inflatable dinghy parted company in offshore winds just out from Castor Bay.

The incident occurred about 7pm last Monday, 11 November, a police spokesperson says.

By the time the helicopter arrived, the man, who was wearing a lifejacket, had swum to shore between Castor Bay and Milford Beach. Police spoke to the man and called an ambulance as a precaution. The inflatable dinghy was recovered by a passing yacht and returned to Milford Marina.

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# MP looks forward to gardening and travel



**Let's go... Maggie Barry MP and husband Grant Kerr are looking forward to the freedom of living a normal life, after enduring the heavy demands of politics**

In the week North Shore MP Maggie Barry announced her retirement from Parliament, a grainy YouTube clip was coincidentally doing the rounds, showing a 26-year-old Barry fronting Radio New Zealand's *Morning Report* with Geoff Robinson.

She was somewhat controversially the first woman and youngest co-presenter on the show.

*The Dominion* and *Evening Post* campaigned to get her off the show, she recalls.

"They ran a cut-out coupon – 'Do you hate Maggie as much as we do?'"

Some would say her time in the media spotlight (four years on *Morning Report*, a stint on *Nine to Noon* and her own gardening show on TV One for 12 years; feature-writing for the *Listener*; and a host slot on Radio Live) was ideal preparation for a career in politics.

However, she points out that growing up in an argumentative Irish family, where you needed to have evidence to back your opinions and convictions, was just as important.

It was the Pike River disaster that fed Barry's desire to enter politics. A long-time supporter of hospice, and the first-hand experience of her mother Agnes battling dementia for 10 years, she wanted to give a voice to the vulnerable and the elderly, who may not be able to speak for themselves.

She entered Parliament as the MP for North Shore in 2011, but told her National bosses she was not a career politician and would be gone after 10 years.

"A decade in politics is enough – I think a lot of politicians go on too long."

Barry has just turned 60, and her husband Grant Kerr is 71. They want to have time to enjoy an active retirement.

In fact, Barry could find herself being a chess supporter across Europe. Kerr was a professional chess player across the Eastern Bloc in the 1970s. One stop he plans to make is the Moscow Central Chess Club, which he last visited 50 years ago.

When Barry announced her decision not to seek re-election in 2020, some vitriolic Facebook trolls told her to "get back to the garden where she belonged".

The irony is not lost on Barry – this is exactly what she plans to do in her retirement. "Once a gardener always a gardener," she says.

"We're falling a bit behind a bit," she admits, looking at some just-planted lettuces in the vegetable patch at her Stanley Pt home.

There's also a Maggie Barry rose, bred for her by the late Sam McGready.

She tells a story of how she is in possession of lilies from former Prime Minister Robert Muldoon.

Muldoon had a talkback-radio slot, *Lilies and Other Things*, and sent out lily seeds to selected callers. Barry's mother got some, and grew flowers from which Barry now has the offspring.

Travel is also prominent on her to-do list: she's interested in going to Bhutan, returning to Mexico, and visiting the cities of Europe where

she once took guided groups on garden tours – all without the stresses of 4am Tuesday starts for flights to Wellington, 80-hour weeks (rising to 100 hours as a cabinet minister), and endless weekend engagements, following the arrival of briefing papers on a Friday night.

Newfound freedoms of living a "normal life" in Devonport beckon. "We've often said, 'Wouldn't it be nice just to pop down to the local bowls club?'" A total change from the "bells and whips" which have dominated her life as a parliamentarian.

Some writing and volunteer work for hospice are also likely in her retirement.

Barry went into cabinet in 2014, serving in the portfolios of Conservation, Seniors and Arts.

She made headlines around the world for the Predator Free 2050 campaign, which aims to rid New Zealand of possums, rats, and mustelids. It is eminently possible, she says. Not a rat has been seen at her property in three years after trapping, and the bird life has exploded.

"There's a real opportunity on the Devonport peninsula to encase it in a 'ring of steel' to keep the predators out," she says. People can literally save the environment, starting in their own backyard, although Barry accepts that a genetic solution to modify the breeding of pests is the only real solution, and hopes the Green Party doesn't manage to "dilute" this option.

Controversially, Barry was accused of bullying by staff members, allegations she says were groundless: "Thoroughly investigated – nothing was found."

Her support of 1080 poison prompted a hatred that she says was her worst time in politics. She received death threats, but she remains true to her conviction that the poison is the best current option.

She's been equally committed to her opposition to David Seymour's End of Life Choice Bill, which would legalise euthanasia for the terminally ill. The progress of the bill through Parliament has been "harrowing", with many New Zealanders sharing their stories before a select committee she chaired.

The bill was passed on 13 November 69–51. It will come into force if a referendum approves it.

Barry herself has a member's bill before Parliament that aims to provide better palliative care for the elderly.

Although she says she has a thick skin, she won't miss the bear pit of Parliament, and the use of the kind of tactics described in the book *Dirty Politics*, by Nicky Hager, which had sensational allegations involving blogger Cameron Slater. A few National Party members were implicated, but Barry describes Slater's work as "despicable" and seems to genuinely admire Hager's tenacity for exposing it.

"I just hope that type of thing doesn't put people off standing for public office."

• The National Party will likely decide by the end of January the new North Shore candidate for next year's election.



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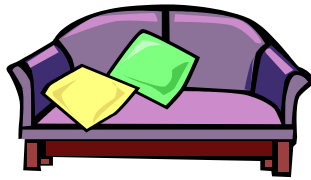
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## Older people on the ball

More than 700 older people showed they are keen to stay active in mind and body by attending an Active Ageing expo in Takapuna.

Community groups and clubs promoted their activities with stalls and demonstrations. Visitors could have a go at some of the activities including Pilates, Tai Chi and chair yoga.

Feedback from exhibitors was they could gather new members without the usual commercial competition and in a friendly atmosphere, Takapuna North Community coordinator Sarah Thorne says. Takapuna North Community Trust organised the 8 November event in collaboration with Age Concern North Shore, North Shore CMA and Takapuna Library.



## Teen surf life saver breaks records

Kailen Brackebush, a student at Westlake Boys, represented the Orewa Surf Life Saving Club at the recent New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championship, breaking two national records at the event: U14 Mixed Medley Relay and U14 Mixed Obstacles.

The event saw over 400 participants from all age groups, involved.

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## All hands on deck! Pirate pandemonium hits Milford



**Bouncing with joy... Amelia Bolderson (5) was among participants in the Milford Pirate Day on 9 November. Events included Painted Bird's vintage fashion show, swing dancing led by Swing Out Central and a competition for the best vintage outfit. Photos: Keeley Watson**



Founded in 1905, Waitemata Golf Club is a beautiful 18-hole course with a flat contour that allows easy walking through beautiful park-like surroundings with well-established trees, shrubs and water features.

Nestled between Mt. Victoria and Narrow Neck Beach, the course is one of Devonport's iconic attractions. Originally the home of the Takapuna Jockey Club, the contours of the infamous 'Back Straight' are still discernible when playing the par 5 13th. The course was originally nine holes within the perimeter of a horse-racing track. Motorbike racing, horse racing, greyhound and professional foot racing shared Alison

Park until 1934. The first full season of the Waitemata Golf Club on Alison Park took place in 1906, with annual subs of one guinea for men, and ten shillings and sixpence for women. Players were to use caddies and pay them sixpence for the afternoon and one penny for each ball found.

Waitemata Golf Club is committed to growing the game among young people and has seen a large growth in junior membership, offering support for both new and experienced golfers. Junior membership is open to all those under 19 years old, with competition days on Sundays. It includes free term-time coaching every Friday after school.

The recently renovated club rooms offer the ideal '19th' of your round. Our relaxing lounge bar and comfortable dining area are complemented by spacious outdoor decking providing panoramic views of the course. The Waitemata Cafe and Bar menu is extensive and very reasonably priced.

The ProShop stocks the latest and greatest products from Ping, Titleist, Mizuno and Wilson, along with apparel and a range of accessories.

There is a new \$30,000 launch monitor, which enables the team to fully customise a club or a set for you and your golf game.

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## Avast, ye hearties!



**Braving the storm... Junior pirate Benjamin Baa (3) isn't too sure about a shower of rain at Milford Pirate day**



**In the salon... Nana He (4) gets her face painted**



**They've got the look... Lonnae (9) and Cooper (6) Parrey**



**Memory Lane... Hundreds of people, including Sophia Anderson in vintage wear for Pirate Day, looked through an exhibition of Milford heritage photos from 5 to 17 November. Photos showed a steam train in Milford, a salt-water pool at the mouth of the Wairau Estuary, a tram to Takapuna, a ferry to Lake Beach (now Takapuna Beach) and other records of past times (Photo: Milford Residents Association)**

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From "The Visionary" Elizabeth Serjeant and Joan Taylor.

Stunning artists' books by Aotearoa NZ artists, writers, printers and makers are on display in the Angela Morton Room. They explore different materials, bindings and forms – from the traditional Codex to fold-outs, to items in a box. These factors generate fresh ways to make books, and to experience reading them.

Rohan Wealleans, Colin McCahon, Keri Hulme, Max Gimblett, Ralph Hotere, and Michele Leggott are some of those whose work features in this selection from the Angela Morton Collection's rare books normally only seen by request.

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## Retiring from Parliament

After nine thoroughly enjoyable years serving you as your local MP, I've decided to retire from Parliament and will not be standing again at next year's general election. It has been an enormous privilege to have represented the North Shore since 2011, a community my husband Grant, son Joe and I have loved being part of and we intend to stay living here.

Politics is all consuming and your life is sometimes not your own, which is as it should be for such an important role. After a stimulating and full-on decade in politics the time is now right for Grant and I to start on our bucket list as long as your arm. As I've always said having Grant alongside has meant North Shore has had two MPs for the price of one and I'm now intending to take up a support role for a while as he follows his dream to play in Seniors Chess tournaments around the world.

When I turned 50, I felt the need to move on from a Broadcasting career spanning 3 decades and instead of reporting from the side-lines I made the decision to stand for Parliament with an ambition to be a voice for the vulnerable.

It was an honour to be selected as National's candidate and I promised the delegates I would do my best to represent the interests of the North Shore for three terms.

I'm grateful and humbled to have had the support of the diverse and vibrant community we've made our home and to have been returned as your MP for the past three elections.

There have been many highlights including being a Minister inside Cabinet for three years under the leadership of Prime Ministers Sir John Key and Sir Bill English. I was given my dream Portfolio trifecta of Conservation, Seniors and Arts, Culture and Heritage. I'm proud to have raised awareness of the scourge of elder abuse and to make a contribution to helping save our threatened plant and bird species and it was an honour to represent my country for the World War One commemorations.

Until the next election, it's business as usual and I will continue to advocate and work on your behalf so please contact my electorate office in Takapuna if there are any issues you want to discuss with me.

### BUSINESS BREAKFAST MEETING Tues 26 Nov, 7am-9am — Takapuna Boating Club, 39 The Strand

I warmly invite you to join me to discuss the state of our economy over a complimentary light breakfast. We'll be joined by Hon Paul Goldsmith, National's Finance & Infrastructure spokesperson who'll lead the discussion around our new policy document on how we would rebuild the economy and help support businesses to grow. We'd welcome your feedback on our policy ideas about the economy and what would work best for you and how you'd like to see things change. Seating is limited so to confirm your breakfast please email us [northshore@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:northshore@parliament.govt.nz) or ph Miriam 09-486 0005.

## Business Breakfast Meeting

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## Attacks on hospital staff down since security tightened

The numbers of attacks on health-board staff have reduced since stab-proof vests and body cameras were introduced for security staff a year ago.

The Waitemata District Health Board (DHB) has introduced a number of security measures at its facilities to improve safety for staff, patients and visitors, including CCTV cameras, personal alarms, rostering a security guard in its hospital emergency departments and training on defusing confrontations.

"As of 1 September 2018, security and traffic staff at Waitemata DHB started wearing cameras on their vests as part of a proactive plan to deter and de-escalate potential incidents," the DHB's director of human resources, Fiona McCarthy, says.

"The cameras are used in Britain and the US where they are proven to calm situations to a point where clinical staff can focus on caring for patients."

From April to September 2019, there were 357 physical-aggression incidents, a decrease compared with April to September 2018 when there were 447 attacks recorded.

Of 51 physical attacks across all Waitemata DHB services in September 2019, 90 per cent left staff reporting 'psychological effects', McCarthy says in a report.

Seventy attacks were made on DHB staff in August and 67 in July.

In September, all of the physical aggression incidents were caused by people who had no intention to cause harm.

This can be due to the effects of alcohol,

drugs or psychosis, reports to the DHB's board show.

Physical injuries include cuts, bruises, strains and sprains.

In September, 22 attacks occurred in the emergency departments of the DHB's Waitakere and North Shore hospitals in specialist mental health units, including the Mason Clinic, and three in hospital dementia units.

A year ago, community-based staff who make home visits were issued with a smart-phone-based alarm linked directly to police, but so far have not needed to use it. Training on assessing risk before home visits is thought to be the reason, group manager occupational health and safety Michael Field says.

## 'Shambles' Census delays hamper health planning

A lack of recent Census data is hindering local health boards' ability to plan programmes and spending, with a local DHB committee member describing the situation as "a shambles".

Auckland and Waitemata District Health Board (DHB) staff have recently produced reports on predicted health needs in the two districts, but note there is a risk figures for population and demographics may be inaccurate, as they rely on projections from 2013 Census data.

"Would it be too much for Waitemata DHB to put pressure on the government to bring forward the release of Census data" asked a member of the joint Auckland and Waitemata DHBs' community-and-public-health advisory committee, Lee Mathias.

"At every table I sit around, we are hampered in our future planning," said Mathias, at a 30 October meeting.

"This Census has been a shambles. The one before was not fantastic."

Mathias said the report authors did a good job but they must "lie awake at night wondering, 'Did we get this right?'"

The committee agreed to ask CEOs of the northern DHBs to write to statistics minister James Shaw.

One of the report authors, Dr Karen Bartholomew, said the latest government advice was some Census data, originally expected in December 2018, would be available in March 2020. However, Bartholomew said it was likely the data would still be difficult to interpret and need further work.

Statistics New Zealand blames the delay on low participation in the 2018 online Census, with 90 per cent of the population filling out at least some of the Census, compared with 94.5 per cent in 2013.

The Waitemata DHB area contains approximately 627,000 people, making it the largest in

the country, the DHB's Health Needs Assessment 2019 says.

That population is expected to grow by one-third, to 818,000, by 2039.

In that time, the number of people over 65 is likely to increase from 14 per cent to around 21 per cent of the total population.

The population make-up will change, with the Maori population growing by 36 per cent, Pasifika by 41 per cent and Asian by 71 per cent.

As a population, the people living in the Waitemata district are the healthiest and longest-living in New Zealand.

However, Maori and Pasifika people live on average four to six years less than European and other groups, and rates of hospitalisation and death from chronic diseases are two to three times higher than for European/other ethnicities.

In future, the gap in life expectancy for Maori and Pasifika people is expected to widen.

The report notes sources of data include the Ministry of Health and other ministries, ACC, health service providers and the World Health Organisation.

### Front-line experience added to DHB board

A senior North Shore Hospital doctor has been elected to the Waitemata District Health Board (DHB), adding firsthand experience to the mix.

Endovascular specialist John Bottomley is new, along with former Labour Party minister Chris Carter.

Five incumbent board members were voted back in: AUT faculty of health and environmental sciences dean and pro vice-chancellor Max Abbott; women's health advocate and writer Sandra Coney; former distance runner Allison Roe; pharmacist Warren Flaunty and chiropractor Edward Benson-Cooper.

The new board takes office in December.

The two Minister of Health-appointed members representing Maori are finishing up: GP and university lecturer Matire Harwood; and business consultant Morris Pita. The other two appointed members, lawyer, academic and former newspaper editor Judy McGregor, who is board chair, and former New Zealand hockey player and administrator Kylie Clegg (deputy chair), will remain.

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# Extra starry Christmas for St Joseph's



A Takapuna school's Christmas concert is setting the bar high, with guest appearances from parents who are among the country's top musical talents.

World-renowned opera tenor Simon O'Neill, who has three children at St Joseph's Primary School, will perform at the concert.

Back from performing in Berlin, Paris and Los Angeles, O'Neill led a workshop for the school's 450 pupils on 6 November, where they practised a range of Christmas and opera songs.

O'Neill and the children will be accompanied by the Auckland Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor Peter Thomas, who is also a parent at the school.

Gourmet food trucks and a bar will be on hand while parents mingle before the 6pm concert, *Once Upon a Starry Night*, on Sunday 8 December at Westlake Boys High. Tickets and more details on [iticket.co.nz](http://iticket.co.nz)

**Hitting high note... Children at St Joseph's School are excited to be workshopping at their Christmas concert with leading opera singer Simon O'Neill (on the piano) and teacher Peter O'Connor**



**Show business... Children give it their all at a workshop led by tenor Simon O'Neill: Maia Arous (6), Lexi Paterson (5) and Scarlett Lee (5)**



# Tabitha Becroft: Following in Mum's boots



**Many hats... Tabitha Becroft has many roles working for the environment, but restoring Lyford Reserve is what she does for fun**

An early memory of sailing out to protest the arrival of a nuclear-powered US warship planted a seed of environmental activism for Sunnynook's Tabitha Becroft.

"We were a tiny sailing dinghy among the massive fleet of boats," Becroft says.

"The US wouldn't confirm or deny whether they had nuclear arms."

The expedition was led by Becroft's mother, Genevieve Becroft, who was well-known in Takapuna for community leadership and arts patronage, and also a keen gardener.

"She was always gardening and an environmental activist," says her daughter, who has been the driving force behind the restoration of Sunnynook's Lyford bush reserve, the largest expanse of bush in the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area.

Not that Becroft approves of the board's name.

"It's a mouthful, but there isn't an easy way to name the area. I prefer 'Sunnynook South'," she jokes, adding it's not an original idea.

Earlier this year, Lyford Reserve's path was officially opened, making it much easier for the community to both enjoy and maintain the "native haven", as Becroft calls it.

The path was completed in collaboration with Auckland Council and supported by a local board grant, but there was still a big

contribution from the community.

Becroft has dragged her family into helping, with her husband's Takapuna engineering firm, Stellar Projects, contributing above and beyond the time paid for from the local board funding, and her children doing everything from tree-planting to making weta hotels from bamboo.

The secret to getting a project like this going is just to start, Becroft says. Then people contribute.

Becroft wears many hats professionally, but leading the Lyford Reserve project, on behalf of the Sunnynook Community Association, is what she does "for fun".

She leads working bees on the third Saturday of the month, and has been doing trapping mainly on her own.

Becroft plans to work with the new environmental coordinator Fiona Martin to expand pest control in the reserve. (See Green Page 23, for more on Martin.)

Pollution of a stream in Lyford Reserve is another concern. The council tests it four times a year, but Becroft is dismayed residents dump shells and garden waste into it.

Becroft is positive the estuary can become cleaner, if work is coordinated and looks forward to Martin's role in facilitating that. Sadly, once the valley was a large wetland, but now streams have been replaced with concrete channels.

"If you look at the Devonport-Takapuna

Local Board area, water is our point of difference. We have beautiful beaches, an amazing estuary – Shoal Bay is internationally renowned for its wading birds, and Lake Pupuke is the most amazing volcanic lake."

Growing up in the house her mother still lives in beside the lake played a part in that passion, she says.

Becroft's children, now aged 12 to 16, all attended Sunnynook Primary, where Becroft is now employed for three hours a week teaching the children gardening skills. After the children grow the food, a teacher helps them cook it.

She also takes beginners' trapping workshops for community groups, on contract to Auckland Council and the Department of Conservation, with one coming up in Milford, as part of the Birdsong Project, working towards a pest-free area.

A new 'hat' is a two-day-a-week job for Auckland Council as a biodiversity adviser, which Becroft is still scoping out with the council.

Becroft is full of praise for the Sunnynook Primary School and groups in the Sunnynook community for helping out with environmental projects.

Another commitment for Becroft, 47, is caring for her mother – now unwell – who has been her inspiration in giving generously to the community and the planet.

## Advocates call for mayor to 'cut the crap'



**Dire straits... Milford's Warwick Gair explains why the Wairau Estuary needs cleaning up**

**From weeping to action... A Milford residents group lobbying for action on the presence of human faeces and toxic heavy metals in the Wairau Estuary and Milford Beach collect signatures for a petition to Mayor Phil Goff. Milford Weeps' (Wairau Estuary Environment Protection and Swimming) Guy Armstrong (left) and Max Whitehead took their campaign to Milford Mall on 9 November. The petition calls for the mayor to protect the health and safety of beach-goers through reducing hydrocarbons and heavy metals in sediment to guideline levels and making the beach swimmable 365 days of the year by 2025. Another goal is to raise the Milford Beach and Wairau Estuary Safeswim rankings to the average for North Shore beaches by 2022. At press time they had more than 300 signatures. Visit [our.actionstation.org.nz/petitions/milford-weeps-swimmable-365](http://our.actionstation.org.nz/petitions/milford-weeps-swimmable-365)**

### Oodles of nurdles

In the 8 November edition of the Rangitoto Observer, a piece about a Castor Bay beach clean-up mistakenly said about 12 volunteers collected a small amount of rubbish. In fact, the Clean-Up Crew's Emma Wingrove says more than 20 people collected three large sacks of rubbish, mainly fishing line and plastic 'nurdles', which is what fish ingest and die from. It is also what is allowing plastic to enter the food chain. Apologies for any confusion caused.

## Interest rates move and so have we

Martin Edwards  
Mandy Pettit



The latest economic data released showed that the New Zealand economy is slowing with annual GDP falling from 3% to 2%, record low interest rates, Banks tightening credit and low unemployment not feeding into wage inflation.

On the other hand, offshore sentiment is being stimulated by Central Banks cutting interest rates, the uncertainty of US/China trade wars edging toward a possible conclusion and companies taking advantage of lower interest rates to invest for the future.

Diversification within your investment portfolio, while

interest rates are low, provides you with opportunities to achieve both income and capital growth.

Investment markets offer a selection of opportunities for investors, depending on their investment risk profile, from defensive income stocks to growth-oriented stocks. Deciding which options best suits your personal circumstances, whether you are a new investor or an experienced investor, is not an easy decision. As Authorised Financial Advisers on the North Shore, we manage bespoke investment portfolios for clients. These

portfolios are typically spread across several asset classes (cash, fixed income, property and shares in New Zealand and offshore). We continually review portfolios with the objective of identifying investment opportunities consistent with each client's needs and goals.

#### We've moved:

After nine years we have re-located to our new offices at the Ground Floor, Air New

Zealand Building, The Avenue, Smales Farm. We look forward to seeing you at our new office in the near future.

**Martin Edwards and Mandy Pettit are Authorised Financial Advisers with Forsyth Barr, North Shore. To arrange a meeting to discuss your investment objectives in confidence, call (09) 368 0034 or email [ns@forsythbarr.co.nz](mailto:ns@forsythbarr.co.nz)**

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This column is general in nature and should not be regarded as personalised investment advice. Disclosure Statements for Forsyth Barr Authorised Financial Advisers are available on request and free of charge.





## New environmental coordinator bad news for rats



A new environmental role should boost work aimed at restoring native birdlife in the local area.

While surrounding areas, including Hibiscus and Bays, Kaipatiki and Devonport already have pest-free coordinators, Takapuna, Milford and surrounds haven't.

Now, Fiona Martin (pictured) is taking up a 15-hour-per-week role as Takapuna North environmental coordinator, coordinating environmental groups and activities in the area.

Martin will work with local volunteers to implement the environmental plan for Takapuna North – the North Shore Birdsong Project.

This is a plan developed by community groups and finalised in July with the goal of eradicating pests and restoring the natural environment in the area between Takapuna and Sunnynook.

"Fiona brings a wealth of community and environmental experience to the role and we look forward to seeing the amazing things she will no doubt achieve in supporting environmental restoration projects in the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area between Takapuna and Sunnynook," says community coordinator Sarah Thorne.

Martin has relevant experience gained from working in environmental roles with councils in New Zealand and Australia's Port Stevens, and is an active pest eradication volunteer with the Kaipatiki Project.

If you have any questions for her or would like to know more about how you can get involved in environmental restoration, Martin's email is [enviro@takapunatrust.org.nz](mailto:enviro@takapunatrust.org.nz).

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